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GREAT DECISIONS '84
NATIONAL OPINION BALLOT REPORT

June 1984: The following highlights of views expressed—with many dissents and qualifications—are the result of a nationwide mailing of "Opinion Ballots" by participants in the ***Great Decisions*** *program for 1984.*

The ballots are bound in the ***Great Decisions '84*** *book, prepared by the editors of the nonpartisan Foreign Policy Association. The 96-page book includes background and analysis of eight critical foreign policy issues facing the U.S. More than 200,000 Americans joined in study and discussion of the eight topics during February and March, in their homes, clubs, businesses, community organizations, libraries, and in schools, colleges and universities.*

This ***Great Decisions '84 National Opinion Ballot Report*** *is based on 70,396 ballots cast as of April 30, 1984—a 10,000 increase over 1983—and represents the highest return of opinion ballots ever received. The ballots, mailed by readers of the* ***Great Decisions*** *book to Columbia University, were tabulated under the supervision of Dr. Eleanor Singer, editor of the* Public Opinion Quarterly.

- **In its dealings with China, the U.S. should:**

  –Cultivate China as a friendly but nonaligned country;
  –Sell arms to China on a case-by-case basis;
  –Reduce arms sales to Taiwan over time if China pursues a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue.

- **In its dealings with the Soviet Union, the U.S. should maintain military strength but take initiatives to reduce U.S.-Soviet differences.**

- **In attempting to influence Soviet policy, the U.S. should continue to sell grain but stop the export of high-technology goods.**

- **The U.S. should provide economic aid to El Salvador, but only on condition that the government cease human rights abuses.**

Drawing by Chas. Adams. © 1982 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

"Would you say Attila is doing an excellent job, a good job, a fair job, or a poor job?"

• The U.S. should keep relations open with Nicaragua, but provide no military or economic aid.

• Encouraging economic growth in Mexico would be an effective policy for dealing with illegal immigration from that country.

• In dealing with South Africa, the U.S. should:

–Not cut off trade;
–Make the Sullivan Principles mandatory for all U.S. firms operating there;
–Encourage whites and blacks to negotiate a political settlement.

• To help bring about peace in the Middle East, the U.S. should modify the Reagan peace plan in order to win broad Arab support.

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*Background on the **Great Decisions '84** program, characteristics of participants, a detailed analysis of ballots on each topic and texts of the eight ballots, follow.*

BACKGROUND ON '84 BALLOT REPORT

Each ballot deals with one of eight current foreign policy topics. Under each topic one or more issues are placed on the ballot, with participants asked to select for each issue the one option, among several offered, which comes closest to their own opinions, or to agree or disagree with each of several options offered.

This year the large number of ballots received—a 10,000 increase over 1983—made it necessary to sample the returns for tabulation. One of every three ballots cast on the first topic was selected at random, and one of every two ballots cast on each of the other seven topics, for a total of 32,767 ballots tabulated (70,396 cast) by April 30, 1984.

Great Decisions '84 was the 30th in a series conducted by FPA nationwide each year since 1955. In 1976, and again in the six years 1978-1983, **Great Decisions** received the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities for its attention to historical and other humanistic values in foreign policy. In February and March 1984, over 200,000 Americans across the nation joined in study and discussion of the topics, while many more heard radio and TV programs and read newspaper articles which focused on the **Great Decisions '84** issues.

Participants in the discussion groups study the pros and cons of each topic in FPA's **Great Decisions** annual publication and other available sources. Typical participants have more education and more exposure to international affairs than the average citizen. Those responding are far more likely than the average citizen to discuss foreign affairs with others and to be asked for their opinions on foreign affairs. Moreover, they are far more inclined than the average citizen to make their views known to public officials.

It should be emphasized that the **Great Decisions** participants who mail in their ballot on any given issue should not be regarded as a representative sample of all discussion group participants, although the tabulated ballots are a representative sample of all of those cast.

The main themes emerging from the ballots received on each topic are summarized below. The texts of the eight ballots, with complete figures on the responses tabulated, appear at the end of the report.

Topic 1: THE SOVIET UNION: Hard Choices for Moscow & Washington

Virtually no respondents (only 3%) endorsed the proposition that in its relations with the Soviet Union, the U.S. should give priority to a military buildup and should recognize that the interests of the two countries are irreconcilable.

At the same time, more than half favored maintaining military strength while taking the initiative to reconcile U.S.-Soviet differences. A smaller number—37% of all respondents—wanted priority given to cooperation and reconciliation of differences, with no mention of any military buildup.

Asked about the use of economic sanctions to influence Soviet policy, a majority (57%) urged the U.S. to stop exports of high-technology goods while continuing the sale of grain, while 30% opposed any use at all of trade sanctions. Only 6% favored the use of trade sanctions involving grain as well as high-tech goods.

Topic 2: CENTRAL AMERICA, MEXICO & THE U.S. Discord Among Neighbors

Participants in this year's **Great Decisions** program were asked two hypothetical questions about U.S. policy in Central America. One asked what policy the U.S. should adopt toward "a country such as El Salvador, which has often been accused of condoning human rights violations, and which faces a challenge from leftist or Communist guerillas." The most frequent response offered (by 38%) was that the U.S. should provide economic aid on condition that the government cease human rights abuses; another 20% would provide military as well as economic aid under these conditions. A quarter of the respondents favored keeping relations open but providing neither economic nor military support, and the rest offered various other options.

Offered a similar but more restricted set of options with respect to "leftist governments such as that of Nicaragua," 57% of the respondents advocated keeping relations open but providing no military or economic aid, while 19% would provide the government with economic aid. Significantly enough, only 8% advocated supporting antigovernment rebels.

Asked what measures they thought would be effective in dealing with illegal immigration from Mexico, respondents cited economic growth in Mexico, reinstating a guest-worker program, strengthening border controls, and granting amnesty to illegal aliens while fining employers, in that order. However, about one quarter of the respondents failed to respond to each alternative, suggesting that public opinion on this issue, even among a relatively well-informed segment of the public, is far from well formed.

Topic 3: U.S. SECURITY & WORLD PEACE Allies, Arms & Diplomacy

Offered a choice between building up U.S. nuclear forces and freezing or cutting them back, respondents were somewhat more likely to favor a freeze or reduction (47%) than a buildup (38%). But 13% of the respondents rejected all four alternatives offered, indicating that none of the choices clearly captured their imagination as a policy that would strengthen U.S. security, and 3% failed to answer the question.

Opinion was also divided on the topic of missile deployment in Europe. Failing a nuclear force reduction agreement in Europe, only 11% would cancel deployment of U.S. missiles, but an additional 43% would suspend deployment pending further negotiations. At the same time, slightly more than a third of the respondents (35%) would proceed with deployment under those circumstances, and 11% proposed a variety of other options or failed to respond altogether.

Topic 4: SOUTH AFRICA
Can U.S. Policies Influence Change?

On six policy options that the United States might pursue in its relations with South Africa, opinion tended to favor persuasion rather than coercion. Large majorities disagreed with the suggestion that the United States should cut off all trade with South Africa and that it should encourage disinvestment—a voluntary pullout by U.S. firms operating in South Africa. However, equally large majorities agreed that the Sullivan Principles (equal employment and conditions regardless of race) should be made mandatory for U.S. firms operating in South Africa, that the United States should restate its support for a one-person, one-vote political system in South Africa, and that it should use quiet diplomacy to encourage a negotiated political settlement between whites and blacks.

A little over one third of those responding agreed with the proposition that the United States should cooperate militarily with South Africa, regardless of its racial policies, when such cooperation is in the interest of U.S. global policy.

The percentage agreeing with each of these policies was somewhat larger in 1984 than it had been in 1981. Increased support was especially marked with respect to making the Sullivan Principles mandatory and to restating support for a one-person, one-vote political system.

On the question of hastening independence for Namibia, 62% opposed linking independence to Cuban withdrawal from Angola. Only 26% favored continuing the present policy.

Topic 5: INTERNATIONAL DEBT CRISIS
Borrowers, Banks & the IMF

Although 63% of respondents supported increased U.S. financial support for the International Monetary Fund, 28% considered that organization's terms for conditional loans to be too lenient (57% answered, "about right," and only 9% considered them too harsh). Asked to rate a series of conditions in terms of their importance for resolving the international debt crisis, respondents placed greatest emphasis on international economic recovery (85% rated this as "very important"), followed by stricter regulation of overseas lending by U.S. banks (61%), a greater exchange of information among international banks (59%), and lessening trade barriers between developed and developing countries (also 59%). They assigned somewhat lesser importance to austerity measures in debtor countries (49%) and easing the terms for loan repayment (32%).

Topic 6: SAUDI ARABIA & JORDAN
Kingdoms at the Crossroads?

A majority of those responding to the **Great Decisions** opinion ballot indicated that they thought the U.S. should modify the Reagan peace plan for the Middle East in order to try to achieve an Arab-Israeli settlement. The remainder were divided in their opinion: 14% indicated that the U.S. should try to enlist Jordan's support for the Reagan plan, 20% urged that the plan be abandoned altogether, and 10% offered a variety of miscellaneous options.

Opinion was almost evenly divided with respect to increasing military cooperation with Saudi Arabia, on the one hand, and Jordan, on the other. Forty-eight percent of the respondents thought that the U.S. should increase military cooperation with Saudi Arabia, whereas 48% thought the U.S. should not; and 41% wanted to increase military cooperation with Jordan, whereas 52% opposed such a policy.

Topic 7: CHINA & THE U.S.
Five Years After Normalization

The vast majority (89%) of respondents thought the U.S. should cultivate China as a friendly but nonallied country. But on the question of selling arms to China, opinion was, somewhat surprisingly, divided. A majority—52%—thought that the U.S. should sell arms to China on a case-by-case basis; 7% were unconditionally in favor of such sales, whereas 37% were unconditionally opposed.

At the same time, only 10% thought that the U.S. should continue to sell arms to Taiwan, while 59% thought that such sales should be reduced provided China pursues a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue. Twenty-six percent opposed the sale of arms to Taiwan under any circumstances.

Topic 8: INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRAFFIC
Can It Be Stopped?

Asked what measure would be more effective in reducing drug use in the U.S.—reducing foreign supplies or enforcing anti-drug laws—a majority (55%) opted for law enforcement, while 39% thought a reduction in supplies would be most likely to achieve that goal.

In order to enlist the cooperation of foreign governments in curbing the flow of drugs to the U.S., 49% of respondents favored using persuasion and the offer of U.S. aid. Thirty percent thought that the U.S. should cut off aid to those countries that do not take adequate steps to eliminate drug production and trafficking; 9% urged the U.S. to stop trading with such countries; and 10% offered a variety of other options of their own.

"36 percent of me had a good day, 42 percent had a bad day and 22 percent is undecided!"

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CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Those who filled out opinion ballots were asked to give some information about themselves.

This year, high school students made up 17% of the participants in the program, and college students 5%. Of the rest, all but 7% had some college education, and 75% had a baccalaureate or an advanced degree. This year, one quarter of the participants were under 30, and 46% were 61 or over. Women outnumbered men three to two. A very high percentage of the group qualify as foreign policy "opinion leaders" in the sense that they say they are asked for their opinion on foreign policy matters often (15%) or sometimes (49%).

Because participants were asked to indicate the first three digits of their zip code on each ballot, it is possible to tell what states contributed most heavily to the tabulated results. The greatest number of ballots were received from California, Oregon, Ohio, Illinois, Florida, New York, Colorado, Arizona, Virginia, North Carolina, in that order. Zip code information was missing from less than 1 percent of the tabulated ballots.

	Percent
*A. *How many years have you participated in the* **GREAT DECISIONS** *program (that is, attended one or more discussion sessions)?*	
1. This is the first year I have participated	48
2. I participated in one previous year	16
3. I participated in more than one previous year	36
*B. *What is your age?*	
1. 17 or under	3
2. 18 to 30	23
3. 31 to 45	12
4. 46 to 60	17
5. 61 or over	46
*C. *Your sex?*	
1. Female	60
2. Male	40
*D. *What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?*	
1. Some high school (including 17% currently enrolled)	18
2. High school graduate	5
3. Some college (including 5% currently enrolled)	19
4. College graduate	29
5. Advanced degree	29
*E. *How often are you asked for your opinion on foreign policy matters?*	
1. Often	15
2. Sometimes	49
3. Hardly ever	37
F. *One final question. Would you say you have or have not changed your opinion in a fairly significant way as a result of taking part in the* **GREAT DECISIONS *program?*	
1. Have	28
2. Have not	43
3. Uncertain	29

*6.8% nonresponse
**10% nonresponse

The Foreign Policy Association has carried out this national tabulation of opinion ballots as a public service. The results express the views of* Great Decisions *participants, not those of the FPA, which is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization and takes no position on issues of U.S. foreign policy.

Opinion ballots have been included in FPA's annual **Great Decisions** since 1955, as a way to encourage participants to make their foreign policy views known to their Washington representatives and to the news media. Since 1976, opinion ballots from across the nation have been centrally collected, tabulated and analyzed, and the results made public by FPA in a special report.

In 1978, processing of the ballots made the transition from hand tabulation to the electronic era. Again this year, computerization of ballots received as of April 30th was performed by Calculogic Corporation, 2929 Broadway, New York, N.Y., which furnished printouts on which this report is based. Opinion ballots received after April 30 are being counted, but unless they alter trends shown in this analysis, a later report will not be issued.

This expression of views by participants in **Great Decisions '84** who have voluntarily taken the time to study and discuss the issues is of special significance to the nation's foreign policy decision-makers. This report is being presented by the Foreign Policy Association to members of Congress and the Executive Branch. It also is being sent to the news media and is available to all interested citizens who wish to receive a copy.

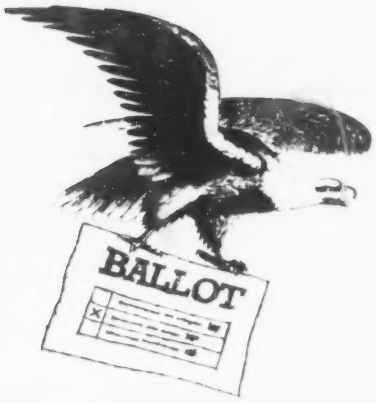
FPA's editors have been assisted in preparing the opinion ballots and in tabulation and analysis of the results, by Dr. Eleanor Singer, noted authority on public opinion research.

Copies of this opinion ballot report can be ordered from the Foreign Policy Association. Please see box with information on how to order.

Eleanor Singer served as FPA's consultant in the preparation of the Opinion Ballots for **Great Decisions '84,** in the tabulation and analysis of the results, and in the writing of the present report.

Dr. Singer is a research scholar at Columbia University's Center for the Social Sciences. For the past nine years she has been editor of the *Public Opinion Quarterly,* the principal scholarly journal in the field of public opinion research. She has published numerous articles on public opinion and other topics.

THE FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION
GREAT DECISIONS



BALLOT STATISTICS*

Topic 1: **THE SOVIET UNION** — **BALLOTS TABULATED: 4,862**

Percent

A. In its relations with the Soviet Union, the United States should:

1. Give priority to military buildup and recognize that U.S.-Soviet interests are irreconcilable. 3
2. Maintain military strength but take initiative to reconcile U.S.-Soviet differences. 57
3. Give priority to cooperation and reconciliation of differences on broad range of issues. 37
4. Other, no response. 4

B. In attempting to influence Soviet policy, the United States should:

1. Stop grain sales as well as the export of high-technology goods to the U.S.S.R. 6
2. Continue grain sales but stop the export of high-technology goods. 57
3. Not use trade sanctions at all. 30
4. Other, no response. 8

Topic 2: **CENTRAL AMERICA, MEXICO & THE U.S.** — **BALLOTS TABULATED: 5,179**

Percent

A. In its policy toward a country such as El Salvador, where the government has often been accused of condoning human rights violations, and which faces a challenge from leftist or Communist guerrillas, the United States should:

1. Support antigovernment rebels. 2
2. Keep relations open but provide no economic or military support for the government. 25
3. Provide economic aid on condition that the government cease human rights abuses. 38
4. Provide military as well as economic aid on condition that the government cease human rights abuses. 20
5. Provide unconditional economic aid to the government. 4
6. Provide unconditional military as well as economic aid to the government. 3
7. Other, no response. 8

B. In dealing with leftist governments such as that of Nicaragua, the United States should:

1. Support antigovernment rebels. 8
2. Keep relations open, but provide no military or economic support for the government. 57
3. Provide economic aid to the government. 19
4. Provide military as well as economic aid to the government. 4
5. Other, no response. 12

C. Which of the following measures do you think would be effective in dealing with illegal immigration from Mexico?

a. Encouraging economic growth in Mexico:

Would	81
Would not	4
No response	15

b. Reinstituting a guest-worker program with Mexico:

Would	56
Would not	21
No response	23

c. Passing the Simpson-Mazzoli bill granting amnesty to illegal aliens and fining employers of illegal aliens:

Would	41
Would not	35
No response	25

d. Strengthening border controls to halt illegal immigration:

Would	48
Would not	27
No response	25

Topic 3: **U.S. SECURITY & WORLD PEACE** — **BALLOTS TABULATED: 4,814**

Percent

A. Which of the following do you think would be most likely to strengthen U.S. security?

1. Building up and modernizing U.S. strategic nuclear forces, including MX and B-1 and Stealth bombers. 23
2. Building only second-strike strategic nuclear forces, including SLBMs and single-warhead missiles. 15
3. Freezing U.S. strategic nuclear forces at their present levels. 32
4. Cutting back U.S. strategic nuclear forces. 15
5. Other, no response. 16

B. If there is no nuclear force reduction agreement in Europe, the United States should:

1. Continue deployment of the 572 Pershing II and cruise missiles in Europe as scheduled. 35
2. Suspend deployment pending further negotiations. 43
3. Cancel deployment. 11
4. Other, no response. 11

Topic 4: **SOUTH AFRICA** — **BALLOTS TABULATED: 4,152**

Percent

A. In implementing its policy toward South Africa, the United States should:

a. Cut off all U.S. trade with South Africa:

Agree	7
Disagree	84
No response	9

b. Encourage "disinvestment" — a voluntary pullout by U.S. firms operating in South Africa:

Agree	26
Disagree	62
No response	12

c. Make the Sullivan Principles (equal employment and conditions regardless of race) mandatory for all U.S. firms operating in South Africa:

Agree	74
Disagree	18
No response	7

d. Publicly restate U.S. support for a one-person, one-vote political system in South Africa:

Agree	71
Disagree	19
No response	10

e. Quietly encourage whites and blacks to negotiate a political settlement:

Agree	86
Disagree	8
No response	6

***Totals may not add to 100% because of rounding.**

1. Cooperate militarily with South Africa, regardless of its racial policies, when this is in the interest of U.S. global policy.
   - Agree: 35
   - Disagree: 54
   - No response: 11

B. To hasten independence for Namibia, the United States should:

1. Dissociate U.S. policy from South Africa's and stop linking independence for Namibia to Cuban withdrawal from Angola: 25
2. Continue policy of "constructive engagement" with South Africa but urge South Africa to stop linking Namibia's independence to Cuban withdrawal: 37
3. Continue present policy of linking the removal of Cuban troops from Angola to Namibia's independence: 26
4. Other, no response: 12

Topic 5. INTERNATIONAL DEBT CRISIS — BALLOTS TABULATED: 4,213

Percent

A. Do you support the $8.4 billion increase in U.S. lending resources for the IMF, or not?

1. Yes, I do: 63
2. No, I do not: 33
3. No response: 4

B. Do you believe the IMF's terms for conditional loans are:

1. Too harsh: 9
2. Too lenient: 28
3. About right: 57
4. No response: 6

C. How would you rate the following steps in terms of their importance in resolving the debt crisis?

a. International economic recovery:
   - Very important: 85
   - Somewhat important: 8
   - Not important: 1
   - No response: 6

b. Austerity measures in debtor countries:
   - Very important: 49
   - Somewhat important: 39
   - Not important: 4
   - No response: 8

c. Easing the terms of loan repayment for debtor countries:
   - Very important: 32
   - Somewhat important: 49
   - Not important: 11
   - No response: 7

d. Stricter regulation of overseas lending by U.S. banks:
   - Very important: 61
   - Somewhat important: 27
   - Not important: 7
   - No response: 6

e. A greater exchange of information among international banks:
   - Very important: 59
   - Somewhat important: 29
   - Not important: 6
   - No response: 6

f. Lessening trade barriers between developed and developing countries:
   - Very important: 59
   - Somewhat important: 30
   - Not important: 4
   - No response: 7

Topic 6. SAUDI ARABIA & JORDAN — BALLOTS TABULATED: 4,183

Percent

A. To help get Middle East peace efforts back on track, the United States should:

1. Try to win Jordan's support for the Reagan peace plan: 14
2. Modify the peace plan in order to win broad Arab support: 52
3. Set aside the Reagan peace plan altogether: 20
4. Other, no response: 14

B. Should the United States increase its military cooperation with Saudi Arabia, or not?

1. Yes, it should: 48
2. No, it should not: 48
3. No response: 4

C. Should the United States increase its military cooperation with Jordan, or not?

1. Yes, it should: 41
2. No, it should not: 52
3. No response: 7

Topic 7. CHINA & THE U.S. — BALLOTS TABULATED: 2,972

Percent

A. In its dealings with China, the United States should:

1. Cultivate China as a friendly but nonallied country: 89
2. Adopt a cool, distant relationship with China: 7
3. Other, no response: 4

B. Should the United States sell arms to China, or not?

1. Yes, it should: 7
2. Yes, on a case-by-case basis: 52
3. No, it should not: 37
4. Other, no response: 4

C. Should the United States continue to sell arms to Taiwan, or not?

1. Yes, it should: 10
2. Yes, but reduce arms sales over time if China pursues a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue: 59
3. No, it should not: 26
4. Other, no response: 5

Topic 8. INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRAFFIC — BALLOTS TABULATED: 2,392

Percent

A. To gain the cooperation of foreign governments in combating illegal drug activities, the United States should:

1. Use persuasion and the offer of U.S. assistance: 49
2. Cut off economic and military assistance to governments that do not take adequate steps to eliminate drug production and trafficking: 30
3. Cut off trade with countries that do not take adequate steps to eliminate drug production and trafficking: 9
4. Other, no response: 12

B. Which of the following do you consider more important in reducing drug use in the U.S.?

1. Reducing supplies of drugs from foreign sources: 39
2. Increasing law enforcement efforts against dealers and users within the U.S.: 55
3. No response: 7

HOW TO ORDER

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